

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUITO 00372 152235Z

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

PC-01 IO-11 ACDA-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EB-07 FEA-01

COME-00 INT-05 /093 W

----- 117225

R 142212Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8656

INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 0372

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EC

SUBJECT: SUPREME COUNCIL'S FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE

REF: QUITO 0369, QUITO 0287

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT OF NEW ECUADOREAN SUPREME COUNCIL IN FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE PROMISED STATE OF SEIGE AND PRESS RESTRICTIONS WOULD SOON BE REMOVED, AMNESTY WOULD BE GRANTED BANISHED POLITICAL OPPONENTS, AND THAT ECUADOR WOULD RETURN TO CIVILIAN, CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT WITHIN TWO YEARS OR LESS. HE SAID COUNCIL WOULD CONTINUE PHILOSOPHY OF GOVERNMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES, AND SPECIFICALLY SAID PETROLEUM POLICY WOULD NOT CHANGE. HE WAS ANGERED BY A UPI REPORTER'S QUESTION ABOUT ALLEGATIONS LINKING HIM TO NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. END SUMMARY.

2. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. ADMIRAL ALFREDO POVEDA BURBANO, PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT (AND ALSO COMMAND-ING GENERAL OF THE NAVY AND CHIEF OF THE JOINT COMMAND) ON THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 13 IN HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE SINCE THE COUNCIL ASSUMED POWER GAVE SOME INDICATIONS OF HIS THINKING ABOUT THE DIRECTION AND POLICIES OF THE NEW
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PAGE 02 QUITO 00372 152235Z

GOVERNMENT. THE ADMIRAL WAS FLANKED BY THE OTHER TWO MEMBERS OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL: GENERAL GUILLERMO DURAN ARCENTALES,

COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE ARMY, SEATED ON HIS RIGHT, AND GENERAL LUIS LEORO FRANCO, COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE AIR FORCE, ON HIS LEFT. THE STATEMENTS BY POVEDA WERE MADE IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS BY REPORTERS. PRINCIPAL POINTS OF INTEREST FOLLOW.

3. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. POVEDA SAID THE STATE OF SEIGE WOULD BE RAISED WITHIN A SHORT TIME AND ALONG WITH IT THAT RESTRICTIONS ON THE NEWS MEDIA WOULD BE ELIMINATED. HE ALSO STATED THAT AMNESTY WOULD BE GRANTED FOR MILITARY OFFICIALS AND POLITICAL LEADERS BANISHED FROM ECUADOR IN CONNECTION WITH THE SEPTEMBER 1 COUP ATTEMPT.

4. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. THE ADMIRAL PLEDGED THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT TO INSTITUTE THE PLAN FOR RETURNING ECUADOR TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT WITHIN A MAXIMUM OF TWO YEARS, AND SAID THE TRANSITION PERIOD COULD BE SHORTENED IF THE ATTITUDE OF THE CITIZENRY, THE COLLABORATION OF THE NEWS MEDIA, AND OTHER CONDITIONS PERMITTED.

5. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. THE PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL STATED THAT ALTHOUGH THE CABINET CONSISTED OF A MAJORITY OF MILITARY OFFICERS, IF THE PLAN FOR RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT PROGRESSES SATISFACTORILY THE CABINET WOULD BE CHANGED TO HAVE A PREPONDERANTLY CIVILIAN MAKEUP.

6. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. POVEDA AFFIRMED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE THE PETROLEUM POLICY ESTABLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES AND WOULD PROTECT NATIONAL INTERESTS IN THIS FIELD. HE SAID THE NEW REGIME WOULD CARRY FURTHER THE ENTIRE PHILOSOPHY OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT, MAKING THOSE ADJUSTMENTS NECESSARY TO PROVIDE BETTER SERVICE TO THE CITIZENRY.

7. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. POVEDA SAID THE CASES OF GENERAL GUSTAVO VASCONEZ, WHO IS IN HIDING, AND GENERAL RAUL PUMA, WHO IS INCARCERATED, WOULD BE STUDIED FURTHER. BOTH MEN SERVED AS MINISTERS IN THE PAST REGIME AND OPPOSED
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PAGE 03 QUITO 00372 152235Z

PARTICIPATION OF GENERAL DURAN IN THE SUPREME COUNCIL.

8. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. ADMIRAL POVEDA COMMITTED THE GOVERNMENT TO LOOK FOR SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE OF ECUADOREAN CITIZENS, AND CHALLENGED ECUADOREANS ACTIVE IN THE POLITICAL SCENE ALSO TO WORK AND CONCENTRATE THEIR EFFORTS ON ACHIEVING SOLUTIONS THAT WOULD BENEFIT ALL ECUADOREANS.

9. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION BY A UPI

REPORTER (OF DUTCH CITIZENSHIP) RELATED TO A NEW YORK TIMES STORY OF LAST YEAR REGARDING ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT OF POVEDA IN DRUG TRAFFICKING, POVEDA RESPONDED IN A VERY EXASPERATED TONE THAT THE RUMORS WERE WITHOUT FOUNDATION, THE QUESTION WAS DISRESPECTFUL, AND CLOSED THE PRESS CONFERENCE. (SEE QUITO 0369). END UNCLASSIFIED.

10. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. COMMENT: ADMIRAL POVEDA COULD NOT BE DESCRIBED AS CHARISMATIC IN THE CONFERENCE, AND DURAN AND LEORO SAT DUMBLY WITHOUT EXPRESSION THROUGHOUT THE SESSION. POVEDA WAS OBVIOUSLY ANGERED BY THE HOSTILE QUESTION AND STORIES LINKING HIM TO NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING. IN THE CONTEXT OF THE APPOINTMENT AS MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES OF RENE VARGAS (WHO WAS HEAD OF THE STATE OIL CORPORATION DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY DAMAGING TO ECUADOR AND US OIL COMPANIES), EMBASSY HOPES THAT POVEDA MEANT GOE WOULD STICK WITH RECENTLY CHANGING AND MORE ENLIGHTENED POLICY ON PETROLEUM. POVEDA REPORTEDLY HAS LET IT BE KNOWN HE IS AWARE OF VARGAS' UNREALISTIC IDEAS RE THE OIL SITUATION, AND HE INTENDS TO KEEP VARGAS IN CHECK. END SUMMARY. END CONFIDENTIAL.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, MILITARY GOVERNMENT, PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976QUITO00372
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760016-0047
From: QUITO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760158/aaaabzjy.tel
Line Count: 137
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 QUITO 369, 76 QUITO 287
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUL 2004 by saccheem>; APPROVED <03 NOV 2004 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SUPREME COUNCIL'S FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006